


Coldingham

1897



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b28648808>

Sanitary Report of the Parish
of
Coldingham for the year
1894.

Sanitary Report of the Parish of Coldingham for the year 1897

Gentlemen.

A year is made up of a number of seasonal changes, which are mere repetitions of the years that have gone before, and thus a considerable amount of sameness must characterise even Nature itself. It is impossible therefore that a Sanitary Report which professes to be a record of such changes, with the effects which they exert on the health of a very small district, can from year to year have much variety about it; indeed I feel that it will be impossible for me to keep up in the future, the standard I have heretofore aimed at in these Reports.

Cause and effect are co-relatives. Effect cannot exist without Cause, but it is often difficult accurately to define their relationships, specially in matters Sanitary. Situation and Surroundings, are undoubtedly powerful factors in the causation, and also the prevention of disease, and I have often thought that Coldingham, being placed between the heather, and the Sea, might help to explain its comparative immunity from disease of a serious type, and particularly from infectious ~~diseases~~ ^{complaints}. Be this as it may it is pleasing to be able to report, an all but entire absence of notifiable diseases during the year. Several cases of

Measles have occurred throughout the Parish during the year. Two mild cases of Diphtheria were notified in the Reston district, and one exceedingly mild case of scarlet fever at St Abbs. I have the credit of having reported a case of typhoid fever at St. Abbs, but I always had doubts as to the accuracy of my diagnosis, and had ~~the~~ ^{the "serum"} ~~the~~ test applied to the case which gave entirely negative results.

The Parish may therefore have been said to have been practically free from infectious diseases during the year, and the general health of the community to have been very good throughout. The mortality rate however exceeds the birth rate by 55 to 52 which is a reversal of the ordinary proportion. By an examination of the mortality list however it will be found that a very large proportion of deaths was due to chronic ailments and in persons above 60 years of age. Thus in the first quarter out of sixteen deaths one half were above 60 years of age. In ordinary years this quarter is charged with a large infantile mortality, chiefly due to pulmonary affections, but this quarter such diseases were conspicuous by their absence, and there were only two deaths amongst infants, and the causes of death were not due to seasonal changes. The number of births during the quarter was only 13.

In the quarter ending 30th June there were

eleven deaths and twelve births - of these deaths five of them were above 30 years of age - one over 70 - and the remaining five in persons varying from four to twenty four - In only two cases was death due to acute disease viz Lobar Pneumonia in individuals aged respectively 83 & 73. Death resulted from the after effects of Influenza in a girl of twelve years, and this is the only case during the quarter which can be clearly traced to the effects of weather.

There were 12 deaths and 13 births during the third quarter, but none of these deaths was due to acute disease or to causes arising from Sanitary defects - Four of these deaths were in persons above 70 years of age, and one had reached the patriarchal age of 95. There were no deaths amongst infants during the quarter, and with the exception of two deaths from Consumption there was an entire absence of pulmonary affections throughout.

The last quarter of the year had a larger amount of sickness; but the same immunity from acute chest affections and infantile diseases generally characterized it. Of the deaths during the quarter six occurred in persons beyond 70 years of age, one at 95 - two above 80 - and only one from inflammatory disease of the lungs in an infant of eleven months, and one twelve days old from inflammation of the bowels. The births during the quarter were 12.

On an examination of the Registrar's returns for the year I find that

old age pure and simple was the cause of death in no less than twelve instances. That is to say out of an annual mortality of fifty three, in a little less than one fourth there was no discoverable cause of death further than that the machine was worn down. This is surely a remarkable record and speaks volumes as to longevity of Oldingham Parish. There was an absence of Malignant disease, but Tubercular affections were accountable for eight deaths, this list however includes Meningitis and glandular Tubercular disease. Two deaths during the year resulted from accident - one by drowning, and the other through the person having been knocked down and killed by a passing train. In both instances death had taken place before the bodies were discovered. There are all the particulars I deem worthy of notice in a general Summary of the Registrar's Returns.

I think however a more correct idea of the Sanitary condition of the Parish throughout the year, will be afforded by giving a detailed account of the state of the weather during the different months, and the influence this exerted on the ~~the~~ health generally.

January.

This year the month of January may be noted as a traditional winter month - The year set in with a bright, fair, very mild day, and fresh weather continued with only one interruption, till the middle of the month. On the 15th frost set in and lasted till the end of the month. There were considerable falls of snow during the last week, and the roads were blocked, and had to be cast. The prevailing winds were North and North East. On the 22nd there was a North East hurricane with drifting blinding snow storms. On the 26th there was 20th of frost registered. The health of the Parish throughout the month was very satisfactory - Bronchitis, pulmonary inflammatory affections, and influenzal colds. There were five births and four deaths during the month, and of these deaths only one was due to Acute inflammatory disease of the Chest.

February

The frost which set in with the 15th of the previous month, continued with more or less intensity during the first week of this month, and was succeeded by fresh, and somewhat broken weather which

continued till the end, with only an occasional interruption of a night's frost. Winds variable but light, and chiefly from the North and North West. Pneumonia, Bronchitis, dysenteric diarrhoea and influenza were the chief ailments during the month. There were six deaths and only one birth during the month. Of these deaths three were infants, and in all of them, the causes of death were due to climatic changes.

March

The characteristic feature of this month was the continuance of high winds chiefly from the North and North east, and occasionally from the South east. A common saying amongst the fishermen has been strikingly verified by "When the wind is in the North, on the Sun crossing the line - which it does on the 20th of March - it will continue to blow from the same direction for the following three months" This year this saying has turned out to be correct as with very few and short intermissions the wind with greater or lesser intensity continued to blow from a northerly direction, and the quarter was phenomenally a boisterous one, with a considerable rain fall. There was only a very slight degree of frost during three days in the month, and four days in which rain fell. The high winds seemed to have had a purifying effect as the health of the parish was exceptionally good throughout. There were six deaths, but

none of these were due to causes arising from Seasonal changes, but in all death resulted from Chronic diseases, and four of these deaths occurred in persons above seventy years of age. There were during the month eight births.

April

This Month was ushered in with frost and snow, with a very cold due North wind. The Month throughout was somewhat unsettled, but yet mild on the whole, as shown by the Cuckoo being first heard in the Parish on the 23rd and the first Swallow was seen on the 25th fully ten days before their appearance the usual date of their appearance in ordinary years. In Southern exposures the Law Thorn was in leaf by the 10th of the Month. On the 27th two Swallows were thwarted in their attempts to build their nest in the windows at Coldingham Manse. There was one birth, and three deaths, and there was little sickness. The prevailing cause of illness was Inflammatory affections of the chest. The winds at times pretty high were ~~and~~ chiefly North easterly.

May

A clear, bright, sunny, day ushered in a most May morning; but the Month thus auspiciously inaugurated, did not long maintain its reputation for a Summer Month, as cold North East winds, with dull, cloudy, foggy, wet weather, prevailed from the 2nd until the close of the Month. Rain fell on twelve days, and a

the month was throughout dull, cold, and gloomy, and one did not feel inclined to lay aside their winter clothing till its very close thus strengthening the wisdom of the old saying "never cast a clout till May be out" The moon changed on a Saturday and was full on a Saturday and thus lent support to another Seamans proverb. "Saturdays Change and Saturdays full, never brought good weather and never will" There is nothing of any interest in regard to the health of the Parish to record during the month. There were seven births and ~~seven~~ five deaths during the month.

June

The month began with a dull foggy day and drizzling rain, and such weather continued for the following six days and until the eleventh of the month it was very cold for the season of the year. With the 12th we experienced the first really summer day. From the 14th till the 20th there was cold, dull disagreeable weather, with a considerable degree of frost and cold biting winds which had a blasting effect on vegetation generally, but especially on fruit blossoms. From the 21st till the end of the month there was bright clear sunny weather, with an interruption of two or three days of dense fogs, and mild drizzling rains. On the 13th a case of Diphtheria was certified as having occurred at Covey. Hen of W. which was sent to Hospital

and with this exception there is no entry of disease. There were four births and three deaths during the month.

July

The first six days of this month there was no rain fall, although it was somewhat dull and threatening. Bright glorious Summer weather succeeded, and continued with few interruptions for the following thirteen days. The 20th and 21st were very wet, but after these dates and until the end of the month, there was bright Sunshine, and warm sultry weather. With a maximum temperature of 71° F. and a minimum of 50°. There were several cases of Measles at St. Abbs clearly traceable to importation from Edinburgh. A case of Diphtheria was notified at Preston Cottages, and several cases of Follicular Tonsillitis, with a few cases of scattered diarrhoea amongst children. - new occurrence during the month. There were four births and seven deaths.

August

Hot-sultry weather prevailed during the first ten days of this month, but from this date till the end it was wet and unsettled. There were several thunder showers and harvest operations were delayed. On the 20th of the month harvest was begun at Burnhall. Rain fell on eighteen days of the month. For several days during the course of the month the temperature as high as 80° F. in the shade, and

indoors. The Registrar's returns show five births and four deaths, but there was practically no record of disease during the month.

September

There was wet unsettled bad harvest weather for the first seven days of this month. With the second week there was bright warm sunshine with beautiful dry weather, and clear, cloudless moonlight nights, giving every facility by day and night for harvest operations being prosecuted. From the 15th till the end of the month the weather was somewhat inconstant; broken and showery. The winds were chiefly South East. Gastric and intestinal complaints were the chief causes of invalidism. There was only one death and four births throughout the month.

October.

After three lengthened consultation meetings, on the ridge of the Church roof opposite my house, during the first week of the month, the Swallows took their departure on the 7th. It is impossible however to guess what induced them to do so at so early a date, in face of the glorious Autumn Weather. Their early departure at the commencement of a remarkable spell of Autumn warmth goes a great way I think to prove that it is date, and not weather, or temperature, which influences them in migrating, or at all events we must conclude that they are no weather prophets. After their departure all the other feathered crea-

to enjoy themselves

tion seemed to the fully for fully ten days ^{as there} ~~and~~ were not burdened with family matters. For the week from the 16th to the 22nd inclusive the thermometer registered an average temperature of 61.3° F. which is I think almost a record temperature for so late in the season. The 15th was the only wet day in the month, with a drizzling rain on the 30th and 31st. Another peculiarity of this month was the prevalence of dense fogs at sea. So dense were they that the fishermen had difficulty in steering their course. The oldest fisherman at St. Abbs recollects of no such warm and foggy weather at this season of the year. Storms of wind and rain being more characteristic of the month of October. In ordinary years the fishermen were seldom at sea during the latter end of October for storms of wind, while this October they were ashore for a single day from stormy weather. The health of the community was good throughout the entire month. The only causes of sickness were a few cases of inflammation of the lungs. The births numbered six and the deaths seven

November

The month began with a dull foggy morning, but afterwards fine bright sun-shine, with a maximum temperature of 49°. Dull, cloudy, overcast, damp, but on the whole mild weather continued until the middle of the month, and the thermometer

registered on the 12th and 13th as high as 58° F. The latter half of the month was characterized by somewhat similar weather with temperatures ranging from 54° to 37° F. On one day only during the month did the thermometer fall to the freezing point. The winds at no time high, were chiefly from the north-east and North West. On the 28th there was a North East hurricane, with dark, threatening clouds. There was only a very trifling fall of rain and snow throughout the month. and the health of the Parish continued good.

December

The first ten days brought a good deal of unpleasant weather. Rain, snow and sleet with strong Westerly and South Westerly winds made it very disagreeable. With the 12th clear frosty weather set in but continued only for two days and five degrees of frost were registered. After this date and until the 19th the temperature never reached the freezing point; the days being very changeable, alternating with mist, and bright sunshine. From the 20th till the end of the month it was variable and with few exceptions mild for the season of the year. This irregular weather had a very hurtful effect on the health of the Parish. There were no serious ailments, but very widely spread influenza affections, complicated with Bronchitis,

and Pneumonia prevailed very generally - Measles and Mumps were common amongst the young, and amongst the old Chronic ailments were seriously affected, as instanced by the large Mortality which occurred during the month.

The Batteries, Cowsheds and dairies have as heretofore been periodically visited and on every occasion, all of them have been found to be kept in a highly satisfactory condition.

The Parochial Lodging House at present only contains four inmates. Two Males and two females. The same Matron continues in office, and has during the year continued to discharge her duties in a manner which has given entire satisfaction to the Parish Council & the Parochial Medical Officer; reflects credit on herself, and adds much to the comfort, and health of the inmates. No special cases of Nuisance have been brought under my notice during the year.

I have the honour to remain
Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant
L^d M^d Dougall M.D.
Medical Officer of Health for the
Parish of Goldingham

Goldingham
20th January 1898

*Sanitary Report of
the Parish of Bostons^{down}
for the Year 1894*

